

## Message Text

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ORIGIN AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ONY-00 /011 R

DRAFTED BY AF/C:REGTRIBBIN:LA  
APPROVED BY AF/C:LWALKER  
DESIRED DISTRIBUTION  
AF ONLY

-----087360 181923Z /43

P 181823Z AUG 77  
FM SECSTATE WASHDC  
TO AMEMBASSY BANGUI PRIORITY

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, CT, US

SUBJECT: GOLDSMITH ARTICLE

1. FOLLOWING ARTICLE APPEARED FRONT PAGE OF BOTH  
WASHINGTON POST AND NEW YORK TIMES AUGUST 18.

2. REPORTER TELLS OF EMPEROR'S ATTACK ON HIM - ON THE WAY  
TO DINNER WITH GRANT SMITH, DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION AT THE  
AMERICAN EMBASSY IN BANGUI, CAPITAL OF THE CENTRAL AFRICAN  
EMPIRE, I STOPPED OFF FIRST AT MY HOTEL. SMITH STAYED  
IN HIS CAR OUTSIDE WAITING FOR ME.

AS I ENTERED THE HOTEL LOBBY, FOUR PLAINCLOTHES POLICEMEN,  
ALL ARMED, ARRESTED ME. IT WAS 9 P.M. JULY 14.

THUS BEGAN FOUR WEEKS OF IMPRISONMENT IN THE CENTRAL  
AFRICAN EMPIRE THAT INCLUDED SIX DAYS OF AGONY HANDCUFFED  
AND OFTEN CHAINED IN A WINDOWLESS CELL, WITH WOUNDS OVER  
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MY BODY UNTREATED AND BADLY INFECTED, CLOTHED ONLY IN  
UNDERPANTS, AND WITH A ROUGH CONCRETE SLAB FOR A BED.

TOGETHER WITH MY OLD FRIEND AND COLLEAGUE, JONATHAN  
RANDAL OF THE WASHINGTON POST, I HAD SPENT FOUR DAYS IN  
BANGUI ACCUMULATING VOLUMINOUS NOTES FROM INTERVIEWS WITH  
DIPLOMATS, CHURCH LEADERS, U.S. PEACE CORPS WORKERS AND

LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS.

(I WAS UNAWARE UNTIL MY RELEASE FOUR WEEKS LATER THAT RANDAL WAS ALSO ARRESTED THAT NIGHT BUT LET GO A WEEK LATER). --

ALL THESE NOTES WERE SEIZED. THE POLICEMEN WHO ARRESTED ME WERE COURTEOUS BUT UNCOMMUNICATIVE. FROM A FEW STRAY REMARKS, I UNDERSTOOD I WAS SUSPECTED OF BEING A SOUTH AFRICAN SECRET AGENT. THERE WAS FREQUENT MENTION OF A TELEX MESSAGE I HAD SENT EARLIER IN THE DAY TO THE ASSOCIATED PRESS BUREAU IN JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA.

THE MESSAGE HAD CONTAINED SOME ACCIDENTAL GARBLES THAT APPEARED ON THE COPY AS UNINTELLIGIBLE GIBBERISH. SUBSEQUENT INTERROGATION DISCLOSED THAT THE GARBLES WERE REGARDED BY THE POLICE AS SECRET CODED MESSAGES FOR ME TO TRANSMIT TO A SOUTH AFRICAN AGENT IN BANGUI. I WAS REPEATEDLY ASKED TO IDENTIFY THIS NONEXISTENT AGENT.

THE POLICE TOOK ME BACK UPSTAIRS TO MY HOTEL ROOM, THREW MY BELONGINGS IN MY SUITCASE AND THEN TRIED UNSUCCESSFULLY TO DISMANTLE THE HOTEL RADIO BUILT INTO THE BEDSIDE TABLE. THEY SAID IT WAS A SECRET TRANSMITTER.

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IN HANDCUFFS, I WAS DRIVEN 70 MILES ALONG A PAVED HIGHWAY TO BERENGO, BIRTHPLACE AND RESIDENCE OF EMPEROR BOKASSA I, CHIEF OF STATE OF THE CENTRAL AFRICAN EMPIRE.

BOKASSA WAS THE SUBJECT OF MY ROUTINE NEWS ASSIGNMENT TO THE COUNTRY - A STORY ABOUT THE FORMER FRENCH COLONIAL ARMY SERGEANT WHO HAD PROCLAIMED HIMSELF EMPEROR AND WAS SPENDING MILLIONS OF DOLLARS ON HIS CORONATION, SCHEDULED FOR DEC. 4.

AS WE DROVE THROUGH THE DARKNESS, I ASKED THE POLICE WHETHER WE WERE EN ROUTE TO BERENGO, WHICH I KNEW WAS LINKED TO BANGUI BY THE ONLY GOOD, PAVED HIGHWAY OUT OF THE CAPITAL.

THIS INNOCENT QUESTION WAS LATER USED TO SUPPORT THE CONTENTION THAT I WAS GUILTY OF ESPIONAGE, SINCE ONLY A SPY WITH EVIL INTENT WOULD KNOW THE ROAD TO BERENGO WITHOUT EVER HAVING BEEN THERE.

WE ARRIVED AT BERENGO SHORTLY AFTER 10 P.M. THE HANDCUFFS WERE REMOVED, AS WAS MY JACKET AND EVERYTHING IN MY POCKETS. FOR HALF AN HOUR I STOOD WAITING OUTDOORS IN THE PALACE COMPOUND FLANKED BY A POLICEMAN ON EACH SIDE. A SMALL GROUP SLOWLY APPROACHED ME ON FOOT. IN THE CENTER, I RECOGNIZED BOKASSA, CARRYING THE HEAVY, EMBOSSED STICK

HE USES AS A SYMBOL OF MAJESTY.

I HAD TRIED IN VAIN TO INTERVIEW HIM, AND WAS SOMEWHAT ELATED BECAUSE I FELT A FEW WORDS WITH HIM WOULD CLEAR UP ALL MISUNDERSTANDINGS.

THE GROUP STOPPED IN FRONT OF ME. BOKASSA GLARED AT ME WORDLESSLY. I BOWED RESPECTFULLY AND SAID, "YOUR MAJESTY". THEY WERE TO BE MY LAST WORDS FOR 24 HOURS.

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WITHOUT WARNING, WITHOUT A SINGLE WORD BEING SPOKEN, BOKASSA RAISED HIS STICK AND BROUGHT IT DOWN WITH FULL FORCE ON THE LEFT SIDE OF MY FOREHEAD, OPENING A GASH AND CAUSING ME TO FALL UNCONSCIOUS TO THE GROUND. THE ASSAULT CAME WITH SUCH BRUTAL SUDDENNESS THAT I DID NOT HAVE TIME TO DUCK. SECONDS LATER I CAME TO, LYING ON THE GROUND AND BEING KICKED BY BOKASSA AND THE MEMBERS OF HIS GROUP.

I SAW MY SPECTACLES LYING ON THE GROUND, INCHES FROM MY FACE. I HEARD A RAUCOUS VOICE SAY, "THERE ARE HIS SPECTACLES. CRUSH THEM". A BOOT CAME HEAVILY DOWN ON THEM AND I SAW THE GLASSES SPLINTER INTO FRAGMENTS. WEEKS LATER, A POLICEMAN WHO WITNESSED THE SCENE TOLD ME IT WAS THE BOOT OF THE EMPEROR HIMSELF.

SECONDS LATER, I LAPSED INTO TOTAL UNCONSCIOUSNESS. I REMAINED UNCONSCIOUS UNTIL THE MIDDLE OF THE FOLLOWING AFTERNOON, JULY 15, WHEN I WOKE UP HANDCUFFED IN A SMALL DARK CELL, BLOOD POURING FROM MY HEAD AND FROM A DOZEN SMALLER WOUNDS ELSEWHERE ON MY BODY. ONLY 10 DAYS LATER DID I REALIZE THAT I HAD BEEN DRIVEN BACK TO BANGUI DURING THE NIGHT AND WAS IN THE CENTRAL PRISON THERE.

THE HEAVY STEEL DOOR TO MY CELL WAS OPENED ONCE A DAY, WHEN GUARDS BROUGHT A BOWL OF WATER AND SOME MANIOC, A TASTELESS ROOT THAT IS AN AFRICAN STAPLE. WHENEVER THE DOOR WAS OPENED, AT LEAST SIX SOLDIERS STOOD OUTSIDE, WITH THEIR SUBMACHINE GUNS POINT AT ME.

IN FRENCH I PLEADED FOR MEDICAL ATTENTION OR FOR ACCESS TO AN OFFICIAL OF THE U.S. EMBASSY. I AM A BRITISH CITIZEN AND WAS GREATLY HANDICAPPED BY THE FACT THAT MY  
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OWN GOVERNMENT HAS NO DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION IN BANGUI.

ON SATURDAY, JULY 16, THE PRISON COMMANDER, MAJ. NGONGO, DELIBERATELY TIGHTENED THE HANDCUFFS OVER A WOUND ON MY BADLY SWOLLEN LEFT WRIST. HE ALSO ORDERED MY LEGS CHAINED. THERE WAS NO FURTHER ATTEMPTS TO INTERROGATE ME UNTIL AFTER BOKASSA ORDERED MY RELEASE AUG. 11. NGONGO CONTINUALLY ACCUSED ME OF BEING A SOUTH AFRICAN.

IN THE DARK LONELINESS OF WHAT I LATER LEARNED WAS THE PRISON'S PUNISHMENT CELL, I REALIZED I WOULD NOT BE FREED SOON. MY WOUNDS WERE TOO OBVIOUS, AND I WAS IN EFFECT GUILTY OF HAVING BEEN PUNISHED BY AN INFALLIBLE EMPEROR.

SINCE GRANT SMITH HAD BEEN WITNESS TO MY ARREST, I KNEW THE OUTSIDE WORLD MUST BE AWARE OF MY DETENTION AND SOME MOVES WERE BEING MADE TO GET ME RELEASED. NO HINT OF THESE EFFORTS EVER REACHED ME. IN MY MOST DESPAIRING MOMENTS, I CONCLUDED THAT MY ONLY HOPE WAS TO BE AMNESTIED ON CORONATION DAY, DEC. 4, UNLESS I DIED SOONER OF MY FESTERING WOUNDS.

AT 11:30 P.M. ON THE NIGHT OF JULY 21 - I COULD SEE THE TIME ON A GUARDS' WRISTWATCH - MY SITUATION CHANGED SUDDENLY AND DRAMATICALLY FOR THE BETTER. I WAS TAKEN TO A LARGER CELL WITH A SMALL FORECOURT SURROUNDED BY HIGH WALLS. FOR THE FIRST TIME, I WAS GIVEN BLANKETS. IN THE FREQUENT TROPICAL RAINSTORMS, I HAD SUFFERED BITTERLY FROM THE COLD. THERE WAS NO EXPLANATION FOR THE IMPROVEMENT (WASHINGTON POST CORRESPONDENT RANDAL WAS RELEASED JULY 21).

ON JULY 22, A MAN I LATER LEARNED WAS BOKASSA'S OWN MILITARY MEDICAL ORDERLY APPEARED TO GIVE ME THE FIRST MEDICAL TREATMENT SINCE MY ARREST. HE PUT SIX STITCHES EXPERTLY IN MY FOREHEAD WOUND, CLEANED UP MY OTHER LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
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WOUNDS AND GAVE ME PENICILLIN AND ANTITETANUS INJECTIONS. HE TREATED ME DAILY, UNTIL AUGUST 1, PERHAPS SAVING LIFE.

BUT HE, LIKE ALL MY OTHER CAPTORS, REMAINED SILENT ABOUT MY FATE. I PLEADED TO BE ALLOWED TO SEND A MESSAGE TO MY FAMILY, BUT MY REQUESTS WERE IGNORED. FOR THREE WEEKS, I REMAINED IN THE LARGER CELL UNAWARE OF MY CAPTORS' INTENTIONS AND DENIED ALL HUMAN CONTACT OTHER THAN THE ROUTINE VISIT OF THE GUARDS AND THE MEDICAL ORDERLY.

BUT ONE IMPORTANT CHANGE ENCOURAGED ME BEYOND ALL WORDS: BEGINNING JULY 22- I HAD SCATCHED A CALENDAR ON THE WALLS OF THE CELLS - THE GUARDS BROUGHT ME ONE NOURISHING EUROPEAN-STYLE HOT MEAL EVERY DAY FROM A NEARBY HOTEL.

BOKASSA LATER TOLD ME HE HAD PERSONALLY ORDERED ME TO BE WELL FED IN THIS WAY.

THAT MEAL - WHICH WAS THE ENVY OF THE PRISON GUARDS - THE MEDICAL ATTENTION AND THE BLANKETS WERE MY ONLY LUXURIES.

MY SLEEPING SPACE WAS A ROUGH PLANK.

THE CELL WAS INFESTED WITH RATS, GIANT COCKROACHES, LIZARDS AND MALARIAL MOSQUITOS THAT ATTACKED ME IN CLOUDS EVERY NIGHT. THE CELL LIGHT REMAINED ON FROM DUSK TO DAWN.

DURING THE NIGHT, I WAS LOCKED IN AND HAD NO ACCESS TO WALLED OUTER AREA. THE CONTINUOUS NOISE FROM MORE THAN 750 OTHER - UNSEEN - PRISONERS PREVENTED ALL SLEEP EXCEPT FOR A FEW HOURS BEFORE EACH DAWN.

ON THE MORNING OF AUGUST 11, I WAS TAKEN OUT OF THE CELL  
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FOR THE FIRST TIME, DRIVEN DOWNTOWN TO THE OFFICE OF FOREIGN MINISTER MICHEL GBEZERA-BRIA.

HE GREATED ME WITH SURPRISING WARMTH, SHOOK MY HANDCUFFED HAND AND INTRODUCED ME TO A SPECIAL ENVOY OF PRESIDENT OMAR BONGO OF GABON, CHAIRMAN OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY, WHO APPARENTLY HAD BEEN SENT TO INQUIRE ABOUT MY CONDITION. A PHOTOGRAPHER TOOK PICTURES OF ME SITTING BEARDED AND HANDCUFFED IN A TORN, BLOODSTAINED SHIRT. THEN, WITHOUT FURTHER EXPLANATION OR DISCUSSION, I WAS RETURNED TO THE CELL.

THE NEXT EVENING, MAJ. NGONGO ORDERED ME TO BE TAKEN BACK TO THE PUNISHMENT CELL FOR SMEARING BRICK DUST OVER THE CELL WALLS. SO AT DUSK I WAITED FEARFULLY FOR THIS TRANSFER.

THE DOOR OPENED AND I WAS ORDERED TO DRESS. IT WAS MY FIRST REAL RAY OF HOPE. THE POLICE DROVE ME BACK TO BERENGO, WHERE A GROUP OF MINISTERS OF BOKASSA'S ROYAL CABINET READ ME AN EXCHANGE OF TELEGRAMS BETWEEN THE EMPEROR AND MY WIFE, ROXANNE. THEY SAID BOKASSA WAS SO MOVED BY HER APPEAL THAT HE HAD DECIDED TO RELEASE ME.

BOKASSA HIMSELF THEN APPEARED AND SPOKE TO ME STERNLY AND WITHOUT INTERRUPTION FOR MORE THAN TWO HOURS, INSISTING ON THE VITAL ROLE PLAYED BY MY WIFE IN OBTAINING MY RELEASE AND ACCUSING ME REPEATEDLY OF ESPIONAGE, THREATENING THE SECURITY OF THE STATE AND INSULTING HIM PERSONALLY IN MY DISPATCH ON THE FORTHCOMING CORONATION- WHICH HAD

BEEN TRANSLATED INTO FRENCH.

BOKASSA SAID I WOULD SPEND THE NEXT TWO DAYS UNDER  
"POLICE PROTECTION" IN THE SAFARI HOTEL AND WOULD THEN  
LEAVE FOR PARIS, ON THE FIRST AVAILABLE PLANE SUNDAY  
NIGHT. THE "POLICE PROTECTION" TURNED OUT TO BE THREE  
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SLEEPING IN MY HOTEL ROOM, BUT I WAS IN NO MOOD TO  
COMPLAIN.

ON SUNDAY, AUG. 13, I WAS TOLD THE EMPEROR WANTED TO SEE  
ME AGAIN. FOUR OFFICERS DROVE ME TO THE ROYAL PALACE.  
INSTEAD OF TAKING ME TO BOKASSA, THEY TOOK A TYPEWRITTEN  
PROTOCOL OF MY ACTIVITIES IN BANGUI, INCLUDING CONVERSA-  
TIONS WITH ALL THE SOURCES ABOUT WHICH THEY KNEW FROM MY  
CONFISCATED NOTES.

THEY TRIED TO TWIST MY REPLIES TO INCRIMINATE MY SOURCES.  
WHEN I PROTESTED, CAME THE SHARP QUESTION: "DO YOU  
WANT TO GO BACK TO PRISON?" THIS CONTINUED FOR SIX HOURS.  
IN THE END, I WAS FORCED TO SIGN THE DOCUMENT THEY HAD  
COMPOSED. I MANAGED TO AVOID INCRIMINATING ANYONE  
SERIOUSLY, ALTHOUGH I COULD NOT DENY FACTS RECORDED IN  
MY NOTES.

AT 8 P.M. I WAS TAKEN INTO THE EMPEROR'S PRESENCE IN HIS  
ORNATE SALON, SURROUNDED BY SOME 20 OF HIS CHILDREN AND  
A DOZEN OR SO OF HIS MINISTERS. HIS MANNER WAS THAT OF  
A PERSON ADMITTING A STRANGER INTO HIS INTIMATE FAMILY  
CIRCLE AS A UNIQUE GESTURE OF TRUST. HE SPOKE TO ME WITH-  
OUT INTERRUPTION FOR THREE HOURS WHILE THE CHILDREN AND  
MINISTERS - INCLUDING PRIME MINISTER ANGE PATASSEE - SAT  
IN SPELLBOUND SILENCE.

HE REPEATEDLY INSISTED THAT THE LOVE OF MY WIFE HAD SAVED  
MY LIFE AND SAID HE WOULD HENCEFORTH REGARD US BOTH AS  
MEMBERS OF HIS ENTOURAGE. THE DISCOURSE RANGED OVER THIS  
ENTIRE CAREER AND WAS PUNCTUATED BY ASSERTIONS OF HIS  
ABSOLUTE AND UNLIMITED POWER.  
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WITH THE PLANE ALREADY ON THE GROUND AND WAITING FOR ME  
IN BANGUI 70 MILES AWAY, BOKASSA TOOK LEAVE OF ME BY  
KISSING ME THREE TIMES ON EACH CHEEK.

3. SEPARATE ARTICLE IN POST ONLY - U.S. RECALLING  
AMBASSADOR TO CENTRAL AFRICAN EMPIRE - THE U.S.

AMBASSADOR TO THE CENTRAL AFRICAN EMPIRE, ANTHONY  
QUAINTON, IS BEING RECALLED FOR CONSULTATIONS IN  
CONNECTION WITH THE RECENT IMPRISONMENT OF TWO  
JOURNALISTS, ONE AMERICAN AND ONE BRITISH.

"OBVIOUSLY WE ARE CONCERNED ABOUT SUCH ACTIONS", STATE  
DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN HODDING CARTER III SAID YESTERDAY,  
ADDING THAT THE U.S. EMBASSY HAD MADE ITS POSITION  
KNOWN TO AUTHORITIES IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN EMPIRE.

"WE ARE VERY CONCERNED ABOUT THE JAILING OF THESE  
JOURNALISTS," CARTER SAID. "WE ARE EXAMINING WHAT DID  
HAPPEN AND WE ARE EXAMINING IT IN THE CONTEXT OF OUR  
OVERALL HUMAN RIGHTS POSITION, AND IN LIGHT OF OUR  
BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH THE CENTRAL AFRICAN EMPIRE".

4. DECONTROL UPON RECEIPT. VANCE

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** Z  
**Capture Date:** 22-Sep-1999 12:00:00 am  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** DETENTION, JOURNALISTS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Sent Date:** 18-Aug-1977 12:00:00 am  
**Decaption Date:** 22 May 2009  
**Decaption Note:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 22 May 2009  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1977STATE196578  
**Document Source:** ADS  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** AF/C:REGRIBBIN:LA  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** N/A  
**Errors:** n/a  
**Expiration:**  
**Film Number:** D770298-1122  
**Format:** TEL  
**From:** STATE  
**Handling Restrictions:**  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1977/newtext/t197708117/baaaetoc.tel  
**Line Count:** 345  
**Litigation Code IDs:**  
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**Litigation History:**  
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**Office:** ORIGIN AF  
**Original Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** ONLY  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 7  
**Previous Channel Indicators:**  
**Previous Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** ONLY  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Retention:** 0  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 09-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**SAS ID:** 1445968  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** GOLDSMITH ARTICLE  
**TAGS:** PFOR, SHUM, SOPN, CT, US, (GOLDSMITH, MICHAEL)  
**To:** BANGUI  
**Type:** TE  
**vdkgvwkey:** odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS\_Docs/78e85751-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc  
**Review Markings:**  
Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
22 May 2009  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009